



## News Release

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**Media Contact:**

Kalynn Filion

Utah Department of Health

(o) 801-538-7009 (c) 801-815-4423

# Utah's Skin Cancer Rate is 'Sky' High

*Residents should cover up and use sunscreen every day*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – With a skin cancer rate among the 10 highest in the nation, Utah health officials are urging residents to take steps to keep their skin safe. Utah Department of Health (UDOH) data show that the rate of melanoma—the deadliest form of skin cancer—is increasing. In 2005, 554 Utahns were diagnosed with melanoma, up from 494 in 2004. Every year, melanoma kills an average of 63 Utah residents.

The good news is that skin cancer is preventable when sun protection measures are used consistently. UDOH and the Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN) recommend:

- 1) Applying sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before spending time outdoors and reapply every two hours;
- 2) Covering up by wearing hats, long sleeves, and sunglasses;
- 3) Avoiding the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when you are most likely to be exposed to the ultra violet rays that damage and age your skin; and
- 4) Seeking shade when you can't avoid the sun.

“As summer begins, we’re all going to be outside more working and playing,” said Kalynn Filion, health program specialist, UDOH. “We need to make sunscreen a part of our daily routines, and combine it with at least one other sun protection measure for maximum effectiveness. And, remember that even on cloudy days, the sun’s ultraviolet rays burn through the cloud cover and can damage your skin,” Filion added.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) expects 62,480 new cases of melanoma and 8,420 deaths from the disease to occur in the U.S. during 2008.

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## Page 2 of 2 - Utah's Skin Cancer Rate is 'Sky' High

The melanoma rate has been climbing in the U.S. since the 1970s. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show the overall U.S. melanoma rate is 17 per 100,000 persons, while Utah's rate is 25 per 100,000. The District of Columbia has the lowest incidence at just over 5 cases per 100,000. Other states with high rates include Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Vermont, and New Hampshire. The ACS estimates that in Utah, 65 to 90 percent of melanomas are caused by the sun's ultraviolet rays.

In addition, more than 1 million cases of basal and squamous cell skin cancers, most of which are highly curable, occur each year across the nation, making skin cancer the most diagnosed form of malignancy.

Utahns are at higher risk for skin cancer due to the state's high elevation, predominantly fair-complexioned population, and frequent sunny days.

Learn more about saving your skin at [www.ucan.cc](http://www.ucan.cc), or by calling 1-888-222-2542.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*